



CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

LSG 500/LNG 300
Binghamton University
State University of New York
P.O. Box 6000
Binghamton, NY 13902-6000

(607) 777-2400
<http://cdc.binghamton.edu>

Division of Student Affairs

PRACTICING PROPER ETIQUETTE

What is Etiquette?

- Practicing good manners
- Knowing how to behave in a given situation
- Knowing how to interact with people

Prospective and future employers expect it. Proper etiquette helps you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market

Communication is Key

Verbal: What you say and how you say it

Nonverbal: handshake, posture, eye contact, facial expressions

Basic Social Etiquette

- Always be punctual
- If invited to a function bring no one, unless the invitation states "and guest"
- Don't smoke, chew gum or tobacco
- RSVP on an invitation stands for the French phrase "Repondez s'il vous plait", meaning "Reply, please." In other words:
 - Respond to indicate whether you will or will not attend
 - Don't show up without having responded
 - If you said yes and your plans change, let the host know you need to cancel
 - Don't be a no-show

Social Functions

- Avoid hanging out exclusively with your friends; mingle and make conversation
- Make attempts to meet as many people as possible
- The art of small talk is asking questions
- If alcohol is served and you are underage, don't drink!
- If alcohol is served and you are over 21, drink conservatively!
- Cocktail parties are not about the food! Don't hover around the hors d'oeuvres!
- If you are of legal drinking age, it is best to keep your head clear and don't drink
- Wear your nametag on your right chest area

First Impressions

- It takes 30 seconds for a person meeting you for the first time to form impressions about you, your character, and abilities. You never get a second chance to make a first impression!
- You're always onstage. Always be prepared to look and sound your best
- Good grooming is essential
- Smile and make eye contact

Handshake

- Standard/expected in greetings, introductions, saying goodbye
- Firm handshake conveys confidence, assurance, interest and respect
- While it doesn't matter who extends the hand first; extending your hand first shows confidence
- Treat men and women with equal respect
- Look directly at the person and smile

Introductions

In the business arena, the person of lesser importance, regardless of gender, is introduced to the person of greater importance, regardless of gender: "President DeFleur, I'd like to introduce (student name)"

When being introduced:

- Stand up
- Look them in the eye
- Give a firm handshake
- Greet them - "How do you do?" or "How do you do, President DeFleur?"
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Smile!

Appearance/Grooming

- It's critical to be clean/neat from head to toe.
- Piercings and Creative Hair: Yes, they're the rage. And, yes, you have a perfect right to be who you are. Just remember, employers have just as much right to say that lip rings are not the image they are trying to project. You will have to decide if your personal statement is worth more than the job. Of course, there are fields - fashion and music to name two - where no one would blink at excessive piercings or creative hair.
- Tattoos/body art: if you have it, make sure it won't be visible.
- Clean nails and hands. Nail polish, if you wear any, should be conservative.
- Don't overdo cologne or perfume. In fact, none can be a wise decision.
- Have a conservative haircut, which is neatly combed.
- Check hair, face, teeth, clothes before entering a room. Fresh breath is a must! No gum or mints in your mouth! Press your clothing! If you don't know how, the dry cleaner will take care of it for you!

Women

- Conservative jewelry and make-up

Men

- Facial hair policies vary by geography, industry and organization. Basic advice: it should be clean, neat and trimmed

Business Formal Attire

When in doubt, go business formal. Err on the side of being conservative!

Men

- Wear a suit that is either gray, navy, or charcoal
- *Clean*, pressed white shirt (don't forget to tuck it in!). Consider taking your shirts to the drycleaner and having them starched - they will stay nice longer
- Keep ties conservative - not too wide and touching your belt. Tie-a-tie.net can show you how to tie it properly!
- Wear dark, over the calf socks that match your suit (No athletic socks with your nice suit!)
- Black leather belt
- Wear black leather shoes that are polished. No boots
- Don't wear too much jewelry

Women

- Dark suit (knee length hem)
- Light blouse - either with or without a collar is fine
- Polished low heels (no open toe, sling back or stiletto shoes)
- Hosiery should be flawless (no runs) and conservative in color. A shade that matches your skin tone is always a safe bet.

Business Casual

This is not synonymous with “sloppy”! Make sure all clothing is neatly pressed and clean. Also double-check clothing for signs of wear.

Men

- Not expected to wear ties
- Sport coat ok but not expected
- Stylish, solid colored pants
- Long-sleeved solid or striped shirt
- Socks that match your pants
- Matching belt and shoes
- Don't wear: Jeans, tennis shoes, sandals, t-shirts, baseball cap, pants with elastic cuffs, or sweatshirts

Women

- Dress pants or skirt
- Sweater and/or blouse. Blazers are also appropriate.
- Trouser socks or knee high stockings with pants. Tights or hosiery with skirts.
- Polished loafers, flats, or dress boots
- Don't wear: mini skirts, tight/low cut tops, sneakers, shorts, long or bright nails, or spike heels

Communication

Verbal: Develop your vocabulary, cut out slang and youthful talk.

Non-verbal: Attend to posture, eye contact, facial expressions and personal space. Remember to smile!

Written: Short, concise, error-free.

Listening: Stop talking, show interest, ask questions, and don't interrupt.

Telephone Etiquette

The telephone is used a lot in the selection process including setting up interviews, phone interviews, and job offers. Make sure your telephone etiquette is top-rate!

- Tone of voice is 70% of initial impression; words spoken 30%
- Speak with a smile in your voice (and on your face)
- Focus on the call; not on doing something else
- Don't eat or drink while on the phone
- When talking on the phone with a potential employer or for other business, do not put them on hold while you answer another phone call
- Eliminate background noise - pets, TV, music, bathroom noises
- Warn housemates to act appropriately when an employer calls, during phone interviews, or when taking messages
- Your answering machine or voice mail message should be brief, polite and professional
- Return calls promptly (within 24 hours)
- Leaving a message:
 - Speak slowly and clearly (articulate)
 - Provide your first and last name (spell last name)
 - Give your phone number including area code
 - Purpose of call or an identifier
 - Repeat name at end

Email

- Email is not an “etiquette-free” zone nor is it instant messaging! It is a professional form of communication.
- Proofread for spelling and grammar. Don't rely solely on spell check!
- Avoid conflict & email arguments. Many things can be misconstrued via email.
- Not a replacement for verbal/personal contact

- Be careful in using certain keys: AVOID USING ALL CAPS (or all lower-case) and don't overuse "!"
- Give people a chance to read & respond
- Keep your messages short and concise
- Think before you send (messages are sent immediately). Sometimes saving your message as a draft and rereading it later can be extremely beneficial.
- Everything you send is a reflection of your professionalism

Dining Etiquette

- 80% of second interviews involve a meal
- Long before you enter the restaurant, make sure you turn off your cell phone or beeper
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body
- When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap or resting on the table (with wrists on the edge of the table). Elbows on the table are acceptable only between courses.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation but stay away from controversial subjects
- Order something easy to eat. Stay away from spaghetti, peas, expensive items and anything that sounds like a large quantity of food.
- Do not order alcoholic beverages, even if the interviewer does
- Ask for suggestions from others at the table
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served
- When eating a roll or bread, put a pat of butter on your plate, break small pieces of bread, and butter each piece as you go
- Don't salt your food before you taste it
- Only reach for items that are in front of you. Politely ask others to pass items out of reach.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate
- Eat at the same pace as everyone else
- Place your napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason
- Take small bites at a time and never chew with your mouth open or talk with your mouth full. If asked a question while you are eating, finish chewing, swallow, then speak.
- Throughout the meal, be sure to say "please" and "thank you." Your polite attitude will foster an overall positive impression.
- Eat your entire meal if possible
- Don't ask for a doggie bag
- Indicate that you are finished with your meal by placing the knife and fork, on your plate, at 4 o'clock. Be sure to place the napkin on the right-hand side of your table setting.
- When dining as part of a job interview, generally the interviewer pays

Utensils

- Glasses on your right, bread plate on the left
- Start with silverware on the outside and work your way in
- If you drop a utensil, leave it and asked the waiter for another

CDC has several books on etiquette available in CDC South, LSG 500 including the following:

- Power Etiquette: What You Don't Know Can Kill Your Career
- 5 Steps to Professional Presence: How to Project Confidence, Competence, and Credibility at Work
- The Complete Professional: Solutions For Today's Workplace
- How to Work a Room: The Ultimate Guide to Savvy Socializing in Person and Online
- How to Gain The Professional Edge: Achieve The Personal and Professional Image You Want
- The Complete Idiot's Guide To Etiquette

Refer to CDC's Quick Reference Guide, "[Effective Interviewing](#)" for advice on appropriate interview behavior.